

Statement by
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Assistant Deputy Secretary and Director, Office of Indian Education
U.S. Department of Education

On the Fiscal Year 2006 Budget Request for
Department of Education Programs Serving
American Indians and Alaska Natives

Delivered before the
Senate Committee on Indian Affairs
February 16, 2005

Ms. Vasques is accompanied by
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DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

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Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee, on behalf of Secretary Spellings, thank you for this opportunity to appear before you to discuss our fiscal year 2006 budget request for Department of Education programs that address and serve the needs of American Indians and Alaska Natives.

My name is Victoria Vasques, and I am the Assistant Deputy Secretary and Director of the Office of Indian Education. I am here with my colleagues, Tom Corwin, the Director of the Division of Elementary, Secondary, and Vocational Analysis, Budget Service, and Cathie Martin, the Deputy Director of the Office of Indian Education. At the Department, I oversee the programs that support the efforts of local educational agencies, Indian tribes, and organizations that assist American Indian and Alaska Native students in achieving to the same high standards as all students. I am proud to say my personal commitment to education began with my father, who served as tribal chairman for my tribe, the San Pasqual Band of Mission Indians. He instilled in me the importance of education.

In April of last year, President Bush signed Executive Order 13336 (E.O.), to assist American Indian and Alaska Native students in meeting the challenging student academic achievement standards of the No Child Left Behind Act in a manner that is consistent with our tribal traditions, languages, and cultures. The Department's work on implementing the Executive Order will be highlighted at a National

Conference on April 6th and 7th at Santa Ana Pueblo in New Mexico. The National Conference, required by the Executive Order, will focus on issues affecting implementation of NCLB within Indian Country.

Overview

Three years ago, President George W. Bush launched the most important reform of public education in a generation by signing into law the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB Act), which reauthorized the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA). The new law was based on stronger accountability, more choices for parents and students, greater flexibility for States and school districts, and the use of research-based instructional methods. The overall goal is to ensure that by the 2013-2014 school year, every student, including American Indians and Alaska Natives, will be proficient in reading and mathematics.

States, school districts, and schools are working hard to implement NCLB, and the early returns are promising. A study from the Education Trust showed that in States with three years of comparable data, 23 of the 24 States increased student achievement in mathematics, while 15 of the 23 States increased student achievement in reading. Things are also moving in the right direction for Native American students. The gap between Native American and White students in reading achievement grew smaller in 13 States and remained the same in two. In mathematics, that gap narrowed in 14 States, widened in two, and remained the same in two.

The President's fiscal year 2006 budget builds on the NCLB Act by extending its principles and reforms to the high school level. In too many schools across the Nation, the longer students stay in school, the more they fall behind, with far too many students dropping out. The 2006 budget request includes almost \$1.5 billion for a new High

School Initiative, which will help to ensure that every student, including American Indian students, not only graduates from high school, but graduates prepared to enter college or the workforce with the skills he or she needs to succeed. This is especially important for American Indian students who continue to be disproportionately affected by poverty, low educational attainment, and fewer educational opportunities than other students.

The 2006 budget request for the Department of Education supports the President's commitment to provide resources to help improve educational opportunities for all students. American Indian students will continue to benefit from implementation of the NCLB Act, as well as new initiatives to improve the quality of secondary education. Overall, our estimates show that Department programs would, under the FY 2006 budget, provide approximately \$1 billion in direct support specifically for Indians and Alaska Natives. In addition, significant funds are provided to Indian students who receive services through broader Federal programs, such as ESEA Title I Grants to Local Educational Agencies and IDEA State Grants. The Department recognizes the implementation challenges facing some Native American and rural communities and is committed to working with local, State, and tribal governments to resolve these issues, and has provided flexibility to rural districts in implementing provisions of the law.

Indian Education Programs

The President's request for the Department's Indian Education programs for fiscal year 2006 is \$119.9 million. These programs include formula grants to school districts, competitive programs, and national activities for research and evaluation on the educational needs and status of the Indian population.

Indian Education - Grants to Local Educational Agencies

We are requesting \$96.3 million for Indian Education formula grants to local educational agencies (LEAs). This program is the Department's principle vehicle for addressing the unique educational and culturally related needs of Indian children. These grants supplement the regular school program, helping Indian children improve their academic skills, raise their self-confidence, and participate in enrichment programs and activities that would otherwise be unavailable. The requested level would provide an estimated per-pupil payment of \$204 for approximately 472,700 students, including students in Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) schools.

Special Programs for Indian Children

Our request for Special Programs for Indian Children is \$19.6 million. These funds would be used for three activities.

Approximately \$9.2 million would support an estimated 36 demonstration grants that focus on two objectives. First, school readiness- programs provide age-appropriate educational programs and enhance the language skills of American Indian and Alaska Native 3- and 4-year old children to prepare them for successful entry into school at the kindergarten level. Second, college- preparatory programs for American Indian and Alaska Native secondary students are designed to increase competency and skills in academic subjects, including mathematics and science, to enable these students to successfully go on to postsecondary education.

In addition, the 2006 request would provide over \$10 million to continue two training efforts under our Professional Development program, the American Indian Teacher Corps and the American Indian Administrator Corps initiatives. Approximately

\$8.2 million of these funds would be used to support the American Indian Teacher Corps, which trains Indian individuals, at the bachelor's- degree level at a minimum, and who will meet full State certification or licensure requirements. The 2006 request would also provide approximately \$2 million for the Administrator Corps to train Indian individuals at the master's- degree level to become new school administrators with full State certification. Both programs are designed to provide on-going professional development and in-service support to these new Indian teachers and administrators in their first year of work in schools with concentrations of Indian students.

National Activities

We are requesting \$4 million for research, evaluation, data collection, and technical assistance related to Indian education.

Fiscal year 2006 funds would be used to continue the fourth year of a national study on Native American education. This study collects data through the National Assessment of Educational Progress on American Indian and Alaska Native 4th and 8th grade student performance in mathematics and reading. Fiscal year 2006 funds would also be used to continue research grants and data collections initiated in earlier years, and to promote ongoing program improvement for Indian Education Grants to LEAs and Special Programs.

High School Intervention

The Administration is proposing a new High School Intervention initiative to support the development, implementation, and evaluation of targeted interventions that:

- (1) increase the achievement of high school students, particularly students at risk of failing to meet challenging State academic content standards;
- (2) eliminate gaps in achievement among students from different ethnic and racial groups and between disadvantaged students and their more advantaged peers; and
- (3) enable all high school

students to graduate with the education, skills, and knowledge necessary to succeed in postsecondary education and in a demanding, high- technology economy. In 2006, the Administration is requesting \$1.24 billion for this initiative. Of this amount, \$683 million would be used for continuation grants for programs expiring under the Higher Education Act and \$552 million would be available for State formula grants and national activities. Under the proposal, the BIA would receive 0.5 percent of the formula grant allocation, approximately \$2.7 million in FY 2006.

High School Assessments

The FY 2006 budget request includes \$250 million to help States develop and implement annual high school assessments in reading/language arts, and mathematics. These assessments will provide high school educators with better information on the progress of their students and provide a tool for holding high schools accountable for the education of all their students. Our initial estimate is that the BIA would receive a set-aside of approximately \$1.3 million.

Teacher Incentive Fund

The Teacher Incentive Fund program is a new initiative that would provide formula grants to State educational agencies to reward effective teachers, and to offer incentives for highly qualified teachers to teach in high-need schools. This initiative is intended to help reform teacher-compensation practices, reward successful teaching, and enlarge the presence of an effective teacher in every classroom. For 2006, the Administration is requesting \$450 million for the formula grants program, \$2.2 million of which would go to the BIA.

Title I: Education for the Disadvantaged

Title I Grants to LEAs

Title I provides supplemental education funding to LEAs and schools, particularly those in high-poverty areas, to help the more than 15 million educationally disadvantaged students, including an estimated 285,000 Indian children, learn to the same high standards as other students. Title I funds may be used, for example, to provide eligible students with supplemental instructional programs at all grade levels, extended-day kindergarten programs, learning laboratories in math and science, and intensive summer programs.

The Department is requesting \$13.3 billion for Title I Grants to LEAs in fiscal year 2006, a 4.7 percent increase over the 2005 level and a 52 percent increase since the passage of the NCLB Act. Under the statute, the BIA and the Outlying Areas receive 1 percent of these funds. The BIA share of the set-aside would be approximately \$95.8 million, an increase of \$4.5 million. These funds would serve almost 48,000 children in BIA schools, in addition to Indian children served in regular public schools.

Reading First Grants

Reading First is a comprehensive effort to implement the findings of high-quality scientifically based research on reading and reading instruction. Helping all children read well by the end of the 3rd grade is one of the Administration's highest priorities for education. Providing consistent support for reading success from the earliest age has critically important benefits. Under this formula program, the BIA receives 0.5 percent of the State Grants appropriation. Our 2006 budget request of \$1 billion would provide approximately \$5.2 million to BIA schools.

Improving Teacher Quality State Grants

The President's budget request emphasizes the importance of good teaching for all students. The Improving Teacher Quality State Grants program provides flexible funds to States and LEAs to develop and support a high-quality teaching force through activities that are grounded in scientifically-based research. Funds are used to strengthen the skills and knowledge of teachers and administrators to enable them to improve student achievement in the core academic subjects and for teacher and principal recruitment, development, and retention. States and the BIA also use the funds to achieve the NCLB objective of ensuring that all teachers of the core academic subjects are highly qualified. Under the statute, the BIA receives a set-aside of 0.5 percent.

The Department's fiscal year 2006 request of \$2.9 billion would provide the BIA with an allocation of \$14.5 million.

Impact Aid

Basic Support Payments

Impact Aid provides financial assistance to school districts affected by Federal activities. The Basic Support Payments program is the primary vehicle for providing Federal assistance to many LEAs that educate Indian children. The 2006 budget request of \$1.1 billion would provide approximately \$507.3 million to support the education of almost 125,000 children living on Indian lands.

Payments for Children with Disabilities

Impact Aid Payments for Children with Disabilities help Federally affected school districts to provide the special education services required by the Individuals with

Disabilities Education Act for federally connected children, including children residing on Indian lands. The budget request of approximately \$50 million would provide \$21.2 million for services to almost 20,000 children with disabilities living on Indian lands.

Construction

The Impact Aid Construction program provides formula and competitive funds to support school construction and renovation in school districts that educate Federally connected students or have federally owned land. Under the budget request, approximately \$9.1 million in formula grants would go to districts on behalf of students residing on Indian lands. Funds may be used for such purposes as construction and renovation of school facilities, and debt service related to the construction of school facilities. In addition, districts with high concentrations of students living on Indian lands would be eligible for \$27.3 million in competitive construction grants. In FY 2003, \$25.3 million out of \$26.8 million went to Indian districts.

English Language Acquisition

English Language Acquisition programs support the education of limited English proficient students through a State- formula -grant program that helps to ensure that these students learn English and meet the same high academic standards as other students. The NCLB Act established a set-aside of the greater of 0.5 percent or \$5 million for schools operated predominantly for American Indian, Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiian children. The 2006 budget request would include \$5 million for these schools. In addition, the English Language Acquisition State- formula- grant funds would also serve limited English proficient American Indian, Alaskan Native, and Native Hawaiian students enrolled in public schools.

21st Century Community Learning Centers

The 21st Century Community Learning Centers program enables communities to establish or expand centers that provide activities offering extended learning opportunities (such as before- and after-school programs) for students, and related services to their families. The NCLB Act converted this activity from a national competition to a State formula- grant program, with State educational agencies making competitive subgrants within their States. Under this program, the Department may reserve up to 1 percent of the appropriation for grants to the Bureau of Indian Affairs and the Outlying Areas. The fiscal year 2006 request of \$991 million would provide approximately \$7.4 million to the BIA.

Grants for State Assessments

The Grants for State Assessments program helps States develop and implement the additional assessments required by the NCLB Act. Under the funding formula, 0.5 percent of the appropriation for formula grants is reserved for the BIA. For 2006, the Administration is requesting \$411.7 million for the formula grants portion of this program, \$2 million of which would go to the BIA.

Alaska Native Education Equity

We are requesting \$31.2 million for Alaska Native Education Equity. These funds support an array of education services to improve the educational status of Alaska Natives, including student enrichment, preschool programs, teacher training, and curriculum development.

Education for Homeless Children and Youth

Under the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, the Secretary is required to transfer 1 percent of the appropriation for Education for Homeless Children and Youth to the BIA for services to Indian students in BIA-operated and funded schools. Our 2006 budget request of \$62.5 million includes almost \$625,000 for the BIA to provide services to homeless children and youth to enable them to attend and excel in school.

Tribally Controlled Postsecondary Vocational and Technical Institutions

This program, currently authorized by the Carl D. Perkins Vocational and Technical Education Act and proposed for reauthorization under the Higher Education Act of 1965, provides competitive grants for the operation and improvement of tribally controlled postsecondary vocational and technical institutions. Funds provide continued and expanded educational opportunities and training for Indian students attending those institutions, along with institutional support of vocational and technical education programs. Under the budget request, the Department would provide \$7.4 million for these grants.

Higher Education Aid for Institutional Development

The Aid for Institutional Development programs under Title III of the Higher Education Act of 1965, are designed to strengthen institutions of higher education that enroll large proportions of minority students and students from low-income households. The programs provide financial assistance to help institutions solve problems that threaten their ability to survive, improve their management and fiscal operations, build endowments, and make effective use of technology.

The Strengthening Tribally Controlled Colleges and Universities (TCCUs) program authorizes 1-year planning and 5-year development grants that enable these institutions to improve and expand their capacity to serve American Indian students.

Under the budget request, the Department would award \$23.8 million for activities to strengthen TCCUs. Since fiscal year 2001, a portion of funds has supported construction and renovation activities, and the fiscal year 2006 budget request would provide approximately \$13.8 million for these purposes.

The Strengthening Alaska Native and Native Hawaiian-Serving Institutions program authorizes 1-year planning and 5-year development grants that enable these institutions to improve and expand their capacity to serve Alaska Native and Native Hawaiian students. The Department's 2006 budget request includes \$1 million for this program.

Special Education

Grants to States

The Special Education Grants to States program provides formula grants to meet the excess costs of providing special education and related services to children with disabilities. Of the funds allocated to the Department of the Interior, 80 percent is used for the education of children 5-21 years old and 20 percent is distributed to tribes and tribal organizations for the education of children 3-5 years old.

Under the budget request of \$11.07 billion, the Department would provide approximately \$85.3 million to the BIA, more than a \$1.7 million increase, to help serve approximately 8,600 Indian students.

Grants for Infants and Families

The Grants for Infants and Families program provides formula grants to assist States in implementing statewide systems of coordinated, comprehensive, multidisciplinary, interagency programs to make available early intervention services to

all children with disabilities, aged birth through 2, and their families. An amount equivalent to 1.25 percent is allocated to the BIA. Under the 2006 budget request of \$440.8 million, the BIA would receive approximately \$5.4 million.

Vocational Rehabilitation

The Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) State Grants program provides services for individuals with disabilities, consistent with their abilities, capabilities, interests, and informed choice, so that these individuals may prepare for, and engage in, gainful employment. Nationally, this program provides services to about 9,000 American Indians with disabilities each year. In addition, the Rehabilitation Act requires that between 1.0 percent and 1.5 percent of the funds appropriated for the VR State Grants program be set aside for competitive grants to Indian tribes to provide vocational rehabilitation services to American Indians with disabilities living on or near reservations. For 2006, the Department requests approximately \$2.7 billion for the VR State Grants program. The amount set aside for grants to Indian tribes would be approximately \$33 million and would serve over 5,600 American Indians with disabilities.

The 2006 request also continues the practice of the Bush Administration of proposing to eliminate or consolidate funding for programs, including some that have set-asides for Native Americans, that have achieved their original purpose, that duplicate other programs, that may be carried out with flexible State formula grant funds, that are ineffective, or that involve activities that are better or more appropriately supported through State, local, or private resources.

Conclusion

The 2006 budget request for the Department of Education programs serving American Indians and Alaska Natives supports the President's overall goal of ensuring educational opportunities for all students.

Thank you for the opportunity to appear before the Committee. My colleagues and I will be happy to respond to any questions you may have.